

A Short Legal History of the Jews in England

- 1275 King Edward I grants Jews licences for trading and farming in the ‘Statutum de Judeis’ (commonly known as the Anti-Usury Laws) in an attempt to discourage Jews from money-lending and coin-clipping. It was the first Act in which the new Commons took part, in conjunction with the King.
- 1290 To great popular acclaim, King Edward I issued an Edict declaring that all Jews must leave England by 1 November. The wardens of the Cinque Ports were to supervise their departure and see that the poor were able to obtain cheap tickets. No man was allowed to “injure, harm, damage or grieve” them. They were to be allowed to take all their cash and personal property, but their bonds and real estate reverted to the Crown, while synagogues became Church property.
- 1655 *Demurrer* by William Prynne was published, in which Prynne, a distinguished lawyer of Lincoln’s Inn, argued forcefully against Jewish readmission, quoting numerous authorities that having been banished by the King and a full Commons, and “never since could they obtain any priviledge to return hither again,” the banishment was of permanent effect.
- 1656 Cromwell, having executed King Charles I, readmits the Jews. The order leading to the execution of the King was drawn up by a Dutch Jew, Isaac Dorislaus, and approved by a rigged court. According to tradition, Cromwell had intended to sell St. Paul’s Cathedral to the Jews for use as their central synagogue.
- 1753 A Jewish Naturalization Bill (“the Jew Bill”) granted naturalization to Jews on personal application to Parliament.
- 1754 The Jewish Naturalization Bill was repealed following public demonstrations and protest.

1858 The law was changed so that Jews could become Members of Parliament, they formerly having refused to swear an oath “upon the true faith of a Christian.”

1936 The first Public Order Act. Effective from 1 January 1937, it banned political uniforms and paramilitary groups. The law is now very arbitrarily enforced.

1965 The first Race Relations Act was introduced into the House of Commons by Sir Frank Soskice, an immigrant Russian Jew.

1968 The Runnymede Trust was founded by Anthony Lester and Jim Rose, both Jews, a few weeks after Enoch Powell’s ‘rivers of blood’ speech in Birmingham.

1976 The *Jewish Chronicle* of 17 January 1975 reported that “Section 6 of the Race Relations Act, 1965, dealing with incitement to racial hatred, may be amended and strengthened following representations made to the [Jewish] Attorney General, Mr. Sam Silkin, QC, by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. In the view of the board’s Jewish Defence and Group Relations Committee, the weakness of the Section is its present requirement that ‘intent’ to stir up racial hatred must be proven for any prosecution to succeed.” The Editorial expressed satisfaction with the result, but said that it “would better have been achieved by less publicised means.” The Race Relations Act duly removed the need to prove ‘intent’ in prosecutions for ‘Incitement to Racial Hatred’ and was passed in the House of Commons with only 132 of its 635 Members being present.

1985 In 1994, during a Commons debate to introduce further race relations legislation into law, Harry Cohen, Jewish MP for Leyton and Wanstead said, “In 1985, I introduced the Racial Harassment Bill under the ten-minute rule. It was the first Bill presented to Parliament to make racial attack a criminal offence.”

1986 Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Neville Nagler, a synagogue official, was the head of the Home Office department responsible for race relations matters. Whenever a Cabinet Minister made a speech on the subject, notes for the text were always drafted by Nagler, who routinely consulted officials at the Jewish Board of Deputies such as Geoffrey Bindman and Anthony Lester. The 1986 Public Order Act was placed before parliament by the Conservative Home Secretary, a Jewish immigrant from Lithuania, Leon Brittanisky, also known as Leon Brittan, assisted by his cousin,

another Lithuanian Jew, Malcolm Rivkind, also known as Malcolm Rifkind. Official commentary on the law explicitly refers to the Runnymede Trust.

- 1998 A further raft of race law was introduced, overseen this time by a part-Jewish Home Secretary, Jack Straw. Around 27 offences carry increased penalties if the offence is deemed to be “racially aggravated.” The maximum penalty for ‘Incitement to Racial Hatred’ was raised from two to seven years.
- 2006 According to Jewish sources, there are at least 59 Jewish Members of Parliament, with Britain being second only to Israel for its proportion of Jewish legislators. Britain has a Jewish-financed Prime Minister and a Jewish Attorney General. New legislation is being introduced so fast that legal libraries cannot keep up, and government ministers are facing prosecution for breaking their own laws. Jewish press reports in September 2006 admitted that the Edict of Expulsion is still valid, with Israeli historian Ori Katzir saying “All that needs to be done is for the queen to sign a contradictory decree, and this has never been done. I wonder when the Israeli government will demand that the UK will have Queen Elizabeth II sign such a decree and revoke the edict.”